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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

OF

HON. J. WM. STOKES,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

UPON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

HON. JOSEPH H. EARLE

(Late a Senator from the State of South Carolina),

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

APRIL 23, 1898.

WASHINGTON.
1898.

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Mr. W. A. Smith

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS UPON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF HON. JOSEPH H. EARLE.

The SPEAKER. The resolutions submitted by the gentleman from South Carolina will be read.

The resolutions were read, as follows:

Resolved, That the business of the House be now suspended that opportunity may be given for tribute to the memory of JOSEPH H. EARLE, late a Senator from the State of South Carolina.

Resolved, That as a particular mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, and in recognition of his eminent abilities as a public servant, the House of Representatives, at the conclusion of these memorial services, adjourn.

Resolved, That the Clerk communicate these resolutions to the Senate.

Resolved, That the Clerk be instructed to send a copy of these resolutions to the family of the deceased.

The resolutions were adopted.

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Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, we do most honor ourselves when we bestow upon the honored dead the just meed of praise. For the purposes of earthly existence that praise, however high and however worthily bestowed, is powerless to benefit the departed spirit. The word of praise and appreciation sparingly uttered or wholly withheld when it would have been priceless for inspiration to noble achievement falls now upon deaf ears. The pulses that might have thereby been thrilled with nobler aspiration are now dull and unresponsive. And yet it is not a fruitless function that we perform to-day.

The tribute bestowed upon the worthy dead, like the quality of mercy, blesses the giver as well as the beneficiary. Our own hearts and minds are chastened and subdued by these solemn pauses in the absorbing pursuits of active life.

In this aspect alone they are well worth the time expended. But there is another, let us hope.

Powerless as they are upon the dead for inspiration or achievement, but potent in their reflex upon ourselves, they may be even more potent for comfort, for consolation to the family and friends. They may even prove fruitful of high ideals in the minds of younger men—ideals of thought, ideals of activity, ideals of Christian living.

Mr. Speaker, it was not my fortune to know Senator EARLE intimately. Our lives had few points of tangency; unusually few for men in active public service in the same State. The circles of our official functions touched but seldom; those of our social and personal almost never.

We differed widely upon political questions of absorbing interest. Each was an active partisan of his particular school of thought, but always under the ægis of the great Democratic organization. From this aspect it might be proper and natural for me to confine myself to some silent testimonial of sorrow for the untimely death of our fallen brother. Some silent tribute of respect for his memory, some mute tender of sympathy to the loved ones left behind, might fill the measure of reasonable expectation—leaving to those who knew him well the sad though grateful task of portraying his virtues.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is another and a different aspect. While Senator EARLE did not belong to me in the sense of personal friendship, yet, in a wider sense, as a distinguished Carolinian, one who has contributed a worthy page to the history of our State, he is the property of all Carolinians, and I am here to-day to testify to the country that he has a sure abiding place in the esteem and affection of all factions and all parties in his own State. In a still broader sense, as a patriotic American, as a noble exponent of Christian citizenship, he has become the property of us all. His upright life in public station and in private walk has become a part of the rich heritage of our common country.

The measure of the richness of that heritage it is the high privilege of his colleagues in House and Senate to unfold to the country at large. In the presence of this public sorrow, this public calamity, we stand with heads bowed; yet our hearts are aglow with generous pride over the triumphs of our fallen comrade. In this presence we forget all differences; we bury forever all personal

rivalries and animosities, and turn away from the contemplation of all save the ennobling lessons of a noble life.

I have said that I had little opportunity for personal test and study at close range of the character of Senator EARLE. That is true in a literal sense; and yet I have touched his tangents, so to speak, at many points. One thing has impressed me particularly—the uniformity of the impression he made upon those who came into personal contact with him. That impression most frequently found expression in a uniformity of utterance.

"He is a high-minded man" or a "high man" seemed to be the form of expression spontaneously suggested in the minds of most people; and the genuineness of the quality which it expressed was attested in the most practical and searching way, in this, that in the midst of heated political campaigns, when party and factional feeling ran high, no man, however bitterly opposed, ever charged or, I think, for a moment seriously thought of dishonesty or dishonor in the same connection with this man.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the rare quality of the man was concretely evidenced in the fact that though Senator EARLE in 1890 led the most vigorous and aggressive assaults upon what was manifestly a ground swell of public opinion, yet within four years he was elevated to the bench on the crest of that same popular wave before which he had formerly gone down.

That he should in 1896 have been chosen by popular vote in the primaries of his party as his party's candidate for United States Senator but completes the circle of a remarkable political career. But his political career, remarkable as it was, I shall not dwell upon. It has been minutely portrayed by others. I prefer to spend the few moments that I shall occupy the floor in holding up those characteristic qualities which constituted the personality of the man.

Several traits contributed to the apparent transformation of public sentiment referred to. Of the minor traits perhaps none paved the way more fully to this remarkable renaissance of popularity than the uniform sincerity and courtesy of the man. He wielded the keen edge of sarcasm and ridicule with the deft hand of a Saladin; but in the fiercest contest of partisan heat he rarely lost his suavity of manner, and never within my knowledge did

he fail in dignified courtesy. Above the turmoil of excitement that surged around him, his spirit was serene and kindly.

> As some tall cliff which rears its awful form,
> Swells from the vale and midway braves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Yet he was not lacking in spirit. None quicker than he to respond to studied offense. The only occasion upon which I heard him speak during the heated campaign of 1890 presented just such an instance. In the midst of his speech some one in the audience made a remark which he, Senator EARLE (then attorney-general of the State and a candidate for governor), construed as reflecting upon his integrity. Prompt as the report after the flash, and sharp as the crack of a pistol, came the response. Yet none was readier than he to make amend when the offense was withdrawn.

Another thing has impressed me, Mr. Speaker, as I have touched the lives of those who have been in touch with the life of Senator EARLE; that is the firm hold he held upon the confidence and love of the Christian denomination to which he subscribed his faith. More than once have I been surprised to find the name of JOSEPH H. EARLE honored in the home circle of a humble member of the Baptist Church. Honored as a soldier? Yes. Honored as an eminent lawyer? Yes. Honored as a jurist and just judge? Yes, all this; and then I thought there was a tenderer element in the incense of honor to his name as a Christian statesman and exponent of Baptist culture, integrity, and fidelity.

Such recognition, abiding in the breasts of his co-religionists living in the byways quite as frequently as when living on the thoroughfares of thought and activity, constitutes, in my judgment, the highest possible attestation to the quality of the man.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no worthier epitaph written of any man than that which is written in the hearts of the humble—a thousandfold more than that reflected in the plaudits of the proud.

If I were to attempt to sum up in one term the quality which lay at the foundation of the character of Senator EARLE, I could find no fitter term than the single word faithful—faithful to social obligations, to political obligations, to public obligations, to private obligations, to family obligations, and, back of all, faithful to his obligations to his God. In this last consisted the secret

of his power, as it has constituted the secret of all true power, of highest power, in all the ages.

The fathers, in framing our language, recognized this elementary fact. In all the experience of the past, fullness of faith in God has ever been the condition of highest fidelity to human trust and responsibility. The man who has had most faith in God has exhibited highest fidelity in all relations to his fellow-man. And so it has come about that the effect has its name from the efficient cause. The faithful man primarily is the man full of faith in God.

Mr. Speaker, this is the noblest lesson, the most valuable message that comes back from the mute lips of our dead colleague to those of us who survive him.

I have every reason to believe that the full faith in God which inspired and sustained fidelity to all duty and trust inspired and sustained him in his last earthly moments. It could not be otherwise. The faith that had illumined the pathway of duty in public station and in private walk must also have illumined his pathway through the dark valley into the bright plains of celestial immortality. The same creative hand that implanted that faith in his breast, and filled his breast with immortal aspiration, still reigns, and He is just. The existence of the faith, the abiding presence of the hope, is the highest guarantee of the fulfillment of that hope.

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
  Whom we that have not seen Thy face
  By faith and faith alone embrace,
Believing when we can not prove;
Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
  Thou madest life in man and brute;
  Thou madest death; and lo, Thy foot
Is on the skull which Thou hast made.
Thou will not leave us in the dust;
  Thou madest man, he knows not why;
  He thinks he was not made to die;
And Thou hast made him; Thou art just.

Mr. Speaker, this is the message borne back to us from his silent tomb. Let us profit by the message and the lesson.

And now what shall I say, what word of comfort utter. to the widow in her weeds and the orphan in his woe?

I can do nothing better than point them to that lesson and that prayer.

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Mr. Speaker, in one of the most beautiful prose poems ever conceived, Longfellow portrays the bitterness, the sorrow, the gloom, the hopeless desolation of one whose life companion had been snatched away from his side. His wanderings finally led him (by chance, shall we say?) to a rude little chapel in a foreign land, whose open door invited the weary wanderer to its darkened coolness.

He went in. Silence and solitude abode with the coolness there. Nothing was there to move the spirit to devotion. The rude pictures and funeral tablets did not appeal to the artistic sense. Yet the appointed hour and the man had met. The days and weeks and months of weary suffering had wrought their appointed purpose. Through the blinding tears that welled up from a heart burdened with bitter recollections, sore and bleeding, he read on a marble tablet this inscription:

> Look not mournfully into the past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart.

He accepted it as a message from the silent occupant of the tomb. He arose from the ashes of his grief with a new purpose and a new hope, determined to meet the future with a brave heart.

Through their blinding tears may the widow and the orphaned children, as they assemble around the faithful father's tomb, read the same lesson and realize the rich heritage which is theirs—the heritage of an unsullied history, the heritage of an immortal hope. Theirs be the hope, the consolation; theirs and ours the lesson and the prayer. May they and we gather inspiration from his life for a better life—

> Life that dares send
> A challenge to its end,
> And when it comes, say, Welcome, friend!

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